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ARTIST LIFE.

There is such a connection between the lives of Artists and their works, that to the profound student of Art, the latter form an unerring index to the history of the former. Rio in his *Poetry of Christian Art* takes occasion to say of Fra Angelico—"One very remarkable circumstance in the history of this incomparable artist, is the influence he acquired over his biographer Vasari, who lived in an age when very little enthusiasm was felt for mystical paintings; and yet, in his account of those by Fra Angelico, he appears to have emancipated himself from all contemporaneous prejudices in order to celebrate in accents of fervid admiration, the sublime virtues which adorned his soul and the unnumerable masterpieces produced by his pencil. In the fervor of his momentary conversion he goes so far as to say, that so elevated and extraordinary a genius as Fra Angelico possessed could only be vouchsafed to one of pre-eminent holiness; and that in order to succeed in the representation of holy and religious subjects, it was necessary that the artist should be holy and religious himself."

That the last sentiment is strictly true, scarcely any one will doubt, for the religious emotions are of that subtle and inexplicable nature, that we can only define them when we have ourselves felt them. But, there is a broader truth than this contained in our quotation. To be what is understood as a religious artist is a position few aspire to; and still fewer, probably, are capable of sustaining themselves at the same elevation and heavenly intensity of feeling in which Fra Angelico lived. "In order that his task might not be unworthy of Him in whose sight it was undertaken, he always implored the blessing of Heaven before he begun his work; and, when an inward feeling told him that his prayer was answered, he considered himself no longer at liberty to deviate in the slightest degree from the inspiration vouchsafed him from on high, persuaded that in this, as in everything else, he was only an instrument in the hand of God." This is the testimony of his own times to the most lofty artist-life the world has ever seen; and, though the asceticism of Fra Angelico would find at any age, and at this least of all, few ad-

mirers, there is a truth contained in this lesson for all who will receive it.

There are two directions in which purity of artist-life inures to the elevation of art itself as embodied in works; to the artist, by giving him greater intensity and singleness of feeling, and thence a fullness of power unattainable otherwise; and to the public by elevating art in the estimation of society. In regard to the first, it is a common error to impute to genius great erraticism and wider license of departure from the right; but that mind cannot be called powerful, which cannot keep itself from injury, or sustain itself against temptation, and the mightiest genius that ever wandered, was less mighty from having ever wandered. Without any reference to the possession of such religious feeling as the monk-painter had, there is still a power in a high-toned morality to keep the artist's work from falling into weakness or vice. He who lives purely, though he pay his adoration only to dumb nature, will impress his character on his works, and make them to be respected, and loved when those of far greater power but less purity, will be put in out of the way corners. By the simplest laws of philosophy we shall learn that a mind diverted by vices from its great purpose, and weakened by want of self-government, can never win entire success, or approach the point to which its single and devoted efforts could carry it, but in art is this particularly true; since the perception of beauty is given to the moral instincts and morality and passion will blunt those when it leaves the intellect only imperceptibly weakened. No man can have a true feeling for beauty whose life is not such that the beautiful appealing to him from nature, finds response in his own soul. Nor is our position invalidated by the fact that oftentimes there is more beauty in the works of an artist comparatively vicious, than in those of one whose life is unexceptionable because we cannot tell how these instincts come to individuals. They are not given by morality, but energized and maintained by it. Labor as we may, and weary the intellect with the mightiest exertions, we shall only, in art, become greater errants, and mistake, more widely our aim, unless, by a corresponding effort to live purely, we determine to make the motive of our

work more lofty; for that which we love will manifest itself in all that we do.

We hardly estimate, at its proper value, the influence of the character of artists upon the Art, in so far as the public estimation of it is concerned. We have assumed that Art is an elevating power, that it has in itself a spirit of morality, and that its professors are teachers of some truths which men, generally, are ignorant of. If this be true, it is of vital importance to Art, that those who are made its messengers should not only keep their message uncorrupted, but should present themselves before their fellow men in the most unquestionable garb. Let us receive whatever message we may, or purporting to be from whoever it may, we judge it by the form in which we receive it, or the character of its messenger.

So in all sobriety and earnestness we say of Art, that if it have a function of holy use, its professors should, by its effect on themselves, and by their bearing towards society, prove that it is potent as a refiner and purifier. If the reverence of men is to be given to it, especial care must be taken that it do not belie its pretensions, and receive contempt instead of respect, from being offered in foul and unseemly vessels. We judge of religion much according to the character of its priesthood, denying to the dishonest and ungodly even credit for the truth they may tell us. This is just in one sense; and so would it be just to give Art a position according to the character of those who represent and embody it. In fact, the great majority of Art-lovers are lead into it by personal ties and influences, the esteem entertained for the artist often sustaining him in his profession, when the intrinsic merits of the works he produces will not; and the artist and his Art must forever go together in some measure; and the artist who banishes himself from the respect of the good and true, degrades his works with himself, so that be the absolute connection between them what it may, a just and far-sighted policy would indicate to every artist that he should attain to the highest degree of social influence possible to him, that, standing in society as a man to be respected and honored for himself, men shall at once esteem his works more highly, being won to them by their love

for him, and look with more respect to the Art which is worthy the life labor of such men.

Reminiscences.

SKETCHES OF CHARACTER.

Messrs. Editors:—If my recollections of things past become tiresome to the lively fancies of the young readers of your *CRAYON* sketches, I must beg of you to share the blame with me for the spirit you have evoked; but, in complying with your request, I have endeavored to mingle something pleasant with the facts that were probably worth recording, and with a desire to avoid the garrulity of old age in the needless multiplication of words: yet it is easy to show that even the slight recollection of apparently indifferent incidents may sometimes prove advantageous.

In the year 1818, I was often embarrassed in the process of making megilp, not knowing whether to ascribe the fault to the mastic varnish or the drying oil. One day in particular, being much in want of the article, and finding every effort fruitless, I sat down in despair, and then would have given a hundred dollars to any one who could have taught me the cause of my failure. My mind reverted to similar difficulties in Paris; but there, when my materials failed, I had recourse to a colorman in the neighborhood. I was surprised one day to see him mount a ladder to reach his drying oil, so often wanted, from a shelf near the ceiling, and vexed that he should shake the bottle violently, scolding a little girl who had just entered the shop—I only thought it a bad specimen of his temper, but he told me my oil would settle again and become clear. It was now nine years after this occurrence that it recurred to my memory; and, for the first time, it struck me that his anger was assumed, as an excuse for shaking the bottle, and keeping it so high that it might conveniently be shaken. I immediately rose, and without being angry with any one, shook up the sediments in my numerous bottles of drying oil, and found that every one of them produced good megilp with the varnish. The brightest drying oil for this purpose is prepared by putting some litharge into a phial of raw linseed oil, exposing it to the sun, or in a sand bath or hot water, and shaking it up from time to time. When the surplus litharge settles to the bottom, the oil remains a little cloudy, and then is good for use; but when it becomes quite clear, depositing a whitish sediment, it will not answer until it is again shaken up. Simple as this anecdote is, it may be a lesson to young students to notice and remember passing events.

At that time I was painting the portrait of *BERNARDIN DE ST. PIERRE*, and I mention him as an intimate friend of the elder Vernet, so celebrated for his coast scenes and the ports of France, whose waters he so well represented; but being desirous of witnessing the waves of the ocean, he hired a bold pilot at Nantes, where he resided, to take him out to sea, during a terrific storm, where, lashed to the mast, he studied the varying forms of the raging billows.

But Saint Pierre, whose portrait I paint-

ed, with his patriarchal silver locks, though not an artist, was a charming delineator of Nature, still remains in my memory, grouped with his beautiful wife and lovely children, as a most interesting picture. A young lady of Paris, courted by many, gave encouragement to none, and her friends rebuked her for her indifference to marriage. She replied that she would never marry any one but the author of Paul and Virginia, whom she had never seen. One of her friends soon found an occasion to introduce her to St. Pierre. The blooming young woman and the venerable author were mutually pleased, and they were soon after married. I was introduced to her and her lovely children, Paul and Virginia. Requesting of him some account of himself, he wrote me a memoir, which was afterwards prefixed to an edition of his works. This memoir he pleasantly addressed to me—"à mon cher Philadelphie, le Rembrandt de l'Amérique."

At the distribution of the Decennial prizes at the Paris National Institute, where all the learned men of that body were assembled, I asked of our consul who that fine looking, but proud man was, that was crossing the hall. "It is the great chemist, *CHAPTAL*—of a noble family, yet of influence during the Revolution, and now Senator and Councillor of the Emperor." When I was afterwards painting his portrait, knowing him to be a man of taste, and owning a fine gallery of pictures, I asked him whether Napoleon, who was concentrating in Paris, by means of his conquests, the finest works of Art—whether Napoleon was himself a judge of the Arts? "Not at all"—was his reply—"But his great talent is to judge of character, and always to employ the proper agents: the artists, who accompany his armies, make the selection of pictures and statues." After a few moments' pause, Chaptal continued—"Napoleon is a surprising man!—I, even I!" said the proud Chaptal, "I, even I, cannot approach him without an indescribable awe!"

This reminds me of the judgment of another contemporary of the great chieftain. Our Minister at the Court of France, General Armstrong, was never in a good humor with the Emperor, for his sequestration of American merchant ships. A captain of one of them, requesting the favor of his influence, asked General Armstrong what he thought of Napoleon? To my surprise our minister replied in slow, but strong emphatic words—"Why, sir, I think—that he is—the most extra-ordi-nary man that God-Almighty ever created—but, the greatest rascal that God-Almighty ever permitted to exist!"

The Mathematician, *DELAMETRIE*, told me that one day at the National Institute, *Washington* was mentioned with great praise. Napoleon remarked that indeed he was a great man. On saying this, he relapsed into a deep thought, and Delametrie was sure that at that moment he decided *not* to imitate Washington, and become *second* to him, but to be *first* in another character; as his conduct subsequently proved.

CANOVA made a fine colossal head of him, which has served as the basis of all the portraits since made, with the exception of *David's* cold likeness, *Isabey's* weak miniature, and the unfinished sketch by *GERARD*, who declined painting the por-

trait of any, the most distinguished persons, anywhere but in his own painting room. He was, however, induced by *DENON*, to consent to paint the Emperor at St. Cloud. At the day and hour appointed, Gerard was ready with his canvas, easel and palette, under the north light of the breakfast-room. On entering, the Emperor partook of two cups of coffee and toast, as he walked to and fro—then, advancing to the artist's chair, he said, "Now I suppose I must become your subject—but if I was a painter, my model should never sit—I would paint him as he walked about the room." An observation that by no means pleased Gerard. After sitting about twenty minutes, he suddenly rose, saying that some business must take him away, without any apology, or engagement for another sitting, which the artist never would consent to solicit: and from this unfinished head the numerous portraits were painted by Gerard, for presentations to foreign courts. This anecdote was told me by Gerard himself, as I looked at his fine, but unfinished sketch.

On the approaching marriage with the archduchess, Maria Louisa, Isabey was called out, to the village where she stopped, until arrangements were made for her grand entry into Paris, to paint her miniature. Chaudet was required to proceed there and make her bust, in doing which he caught cold and died; and Gerard was entreated by Denon for a similar office, which he declined on the score of sickness. "But," said Gerard, "to show that I was not sick, I was out in the street every day." I then remarked to Gerard, (whom I had thought was a native of France), "the emperor can be no favorite with you." "No," said he, with energy, "I am a Roman, and he has robbed my country!" As he said these words I was looking at one of his imperial commissions, a splendid whole length portrait of the beautiful Queen of Naples, who had been sitting that morning. I could not forbear complimenting Gerard on his execution of her white satin dress, as I compared it, decorated with bouquets of diamonds, as it was arranged on a manikin—saying, that in my estimation his painted satin was worth more than all the diamonds on her dress.

Some days after this I was invited to his atelier, at an hour fixed, but finding a carriage waiting at his door, I amused myself for an hour in a print-shop opposite, till the carriage drove off, and then was shown up to receive his expression of regret that I had not come at the appointed hour, "for," said he, "I was taking the last sitting of Bernadotte, before he leaves Paris to proceed to Stockholm. I wanted you to know him, for he is a clever and good-hearted fellow."

On my return from Italy, twenty years after this, I found Gerard in enfeebled health, having relinquished Imperial portraiture, and painting historical subjects, and honored by the Emperor, whom he, nevertheless, could not love, with the title of Baron of the Empire. It was always thus that Napoleon sought to gain, if not the favor and services, at least the silence of his enemies. Carnot, in the National Assembly, had opposed, in a speech of two hours, the Consulship for life of Bonaparte. When I applied to Carnot to sit to me for his portrait for our American gallery, he